
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 October 2024

by **J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/24/3348322

10 The Hill, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire AL4 8PP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Ms A & S Higham & Rois against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/23/2497.
 - The development proposed is two storey and single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the proposed extension would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wheathampstead Conservation Area in which the appeal property, a locally listed building, is located; and the effect of the proposal on highway safety.

Reasons

Wheathampstead Conservation Area

3. The Wheathampstead Conservation Area covers the historic core of the village. The Hill is a principal road within the area, which includes two storey dwellings on the east side. The west side, which includes the appeal property, is less developed with a backdrop of trees screening more recent development to the west, including St Helens School. The street scene is verdant with a backcloth of greenery to the pleasant brick dwellings most of which, including the appeal property, are locally listed.
 4. No 10 has a traditional rectangular plan form over two storeys, with small single storey elements to either end. It has a traditional appearance and is well-proportioned with a simple pitched roof form and regular pattern of windows. In common with the dwellings opposite, it is largely unaltered and retains its original character and appearance. As a locally listed building, it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
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5. Despite its setback from the front elevation, the extension to the side would be a substantive addition to the building, creating a much wider built form facing the road. The extension would be of a lower height than the existing dwelling, but the single storey element and the garage would have different ridge heights; and the extension's roof would have a lower eaves height than the host dwelling. The variable roof ridge and eaves heights and different front roof profile from that of the original building would result in a visually incoherent built form, with the extension paying limited regard to the design of the host dwelling. In addition, the dormers and front porch would not reflect the design of the existing fenestration and doors and, therefore, would not integrate effectively with the simple design and details of the host dwelling. I agree also with the Council that it is not clear that the proposed colour of the window frames would be appropriate.
6. Taking these findings as a whole, due to its width, height and design, the extension would be a disproportionate and incongruous addition to the original dwelling. The setback from the existing frontage would do little to mitigate these effects in the open setting close to the road. The extension would be prominent in views from the public realm and properties opposite, from which views the incongruous appearance of the extended dwelling would be readily apparent.
7. Therefore, for these reasons, the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Wheathampstead Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation¹. Based on the above findings, I consider the harm to be less than substantial in this instance, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
8. Under such circumstances, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal². I have had full regard to the benefits suggested by the appellants and acknowledge that the additional space created by the extension would provide an enhanced standard of accommodation. However, the harm to the designated asset is of considerable weight and, therefore, the proposal would not provide sufficient public benefits that would outweigh the harm that has been found.
9. Accordingly, for the reasons given, I conclude that the proposed extension would not preserve the character or appearance of the Wheathampstead Conservation Area. Consequently, it is contrary to the following policies from the St Albans District Local Plan Review (1994): Policy 69, which requires a high standard of design in all development; Policy 72, which requires residential extensions to be appropriate to the original building, particularly in conservation areas; and Policy 85, which concerns the effects of development on conservation areas. It is also contrary to Policies W8 and W9 of the Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2023), which respectively concern the effects of development in conservation areas and which require high quality design in development.
10. In reaching this conclusion I am particularly mindful of the statutory requirement that in exercising planning functions in conservation areas special attention shall be

¹ Paragraph 205.

² Paragraph 208.

paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area³.

Highway safety

11. The existing parking arrangements are likely to enable two small vehicles in tandem or a larger single vehicle to be parked parallel to the property. It is likely that with one space already occupied a second vehicle would need to reverse into the available space. However, vehicles would be able to leave the site in forward gear.
12. I acknowledge the appellants' contention that the perpendicular parking arrangement within the garage would mean that the driver and passengers could exit a parked vehicle further away from the road frontage than currently. However, to leave the proposed spaces vehicles would need to reverse out of the site onto the road or, conversely, to leave in forward gear vehicles would need to enter the spaces in reverse gear from the road.
13. The appellants indicate that these movements already occur as they own small vehicles that can be parked perpendicular to the road. However, this type of movement would be more challenging with a larger vehicle, which is likely to occur in future given the permanent change in parking arrangements that is sought. Moreover, I note that it has not been demonstrated that the requisite visibility splays are achievable; or that the removal of trees close to the garage or provision of mirrors would help in this regard.
14. Therefore, in these circumstances, the need to enter or exit the site in reverse gear specifically as a result of the position of the proposed parking spaces would result in conditions prejudicial to the safe and free flow of traffic. Consequently, I must conclude that the proposal would have a materially harmful effect on highway safety. It is, therefore, contrary to Policy 34 of the Local Plan, which concerns the impact of development on highways, including on road safety. It is also contrary to the Framework, which states that development should only be prevented on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety⁴.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above it is concluded that the appeal should not succeed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR

³ Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

⁴ Paragraph 115.